

2-20-2005

Junior Recital: Allison Burr, clarinet, and Megan Smith, mezzo-soprano

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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Recommended Citation

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JUNIOR RECITAL

Allison Burr, clarinet
and
Megan Smith, mezzo-soprano

assisted by

Joanne Kong, piano
Charles Hulin, piano
Colleen Fitzpatrick, clarinet
Joy Dupuis, alto clarinet



FEBRUARY 20, 2005 3 P.M.
PERKINSON RECITAL HALL

PROGRAM

Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 7 Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

- I. Zart und mit Ausdruck
- II. Lebhaft, leicht
- III. Rasch und mit Feuer

Capriccio for Solo Clarinet Heinrich Sutermeister
(1910-1995)

Solo de Concours for Clarinet and Piano André Messager
(1853-1929)

INTERMISSION

Shakespeare Songs (1953) Igor Stravinsky
(1882-1971)

- I. Musick to Heare
- II. Full Fadom Five
- III. When Dasies Pied

Elegy for J.F.K. (1964)

Igor Stravinsky
(1882-1971)

Allison Burr, clarinet
Colleen Fitzpatrick, clarinet
Joy Dupuis, alto clarinet

Feldeinsamkeit Op. 86, No. 2

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Ständchen Op. 106, No. 1

Wie Melodien zieht es mir Op. 105, No. 1

Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer Op. 105, No. 2

Little Black Star

John Jacob Niles
(1892-1980)

Crucifixion

arranged by John Payne

Zion's Walls

arranged by Aaron Copland
(1900-1990)

Steal Away

arranged by Harry Burleigh
(1866-1949)

NOTES

The *Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet and Piano* (1849) were composed amid a large collection of chamber works in the productive year following Schumann's successful piano collection, *Album for the Young* (1848). These works utilize various combinations, including use of the clarinet, horn, cello, and human voice. During his short life, Schumann reached his creative peak before middle age, and amassed a large collection of songs, and works for piano, chorus, orchestra and chamber ensembles. Considered a poet, dreamer, and a thoroughly unpractical man, it is speculated that Schumann was plagued with a gradual but fatal decay of his mental state. The *Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet* begin with an expressive, symmetrical piece in A minor, with the following two selections in A Major. With each movement, the manic but beautiful style of Schumann's writing is evident in sudden swells, large leaps, and thematic contrasts. Attention should also be given to the dialogue between the clarinet and piano as each movement builds in tempo as well as intensity. The performance of this work on clarinet in A rather than Bb takes advantage of the chosen instrument's rich sonority and expressive possibilities.

A Swiss composer, Sutermeister rejected the modern trends of his time, instead vying for a more spontaneous and diatonic mode of expression that he felt would remain comprehensible to a wider audience. Sutermeister gained prestige through his operatic works including the German-commissioned *Romeo und Julia*, staged in more than 20 theaters following its 1940 premier. In his later life, Sutermeister gained notoriety for choral works such as the powerful and dramatic *Missa da requiem* (1957) and the *Te Deum* 1975 (1974) which presented a more unsettling interpretation of the religious texts than the 19th-century examples of Bruckner and Verdi. The *Capriccio* for unaccompanied clarinet is a stunning example of Sutermeister's melodic spontaneity. The wide pitch range, sharp dynamic contrast and articulation details keep the piece interesting with continuous forward motion. The spirited opening provides the simple theme which, after being reworked and expanded upon throughout the *rubato* and middle sections, comes back for one last

heavy statement in the concluding bars. In fact, the final section seems to summarize the piece as a whole. In just those few bars the energetic as well as rubato themes return, followed by a concluding swell of notes and an abrupt fade into silence.

A composition student of Camille Saint-Saëns, Messager came to early fame as a French stage composer in the 1870s. He enjoyed much success as a composer of operettas which were performed in both England and France, and he held a position as musical director of the Opera Comique from 1898 to 1904. It was during this time that the *Solo de Concours* for clarinet and piano (1899) was composed. The piece was originally intended as a competition piece for students at the Paris Conservatory and is a representative example of Messager's sense of color, a gift for easy-flowing melody, and a skill in writing music of a dance-like character. The first part of the clarinet solo presents a joyful mood while the middle section features an expressive melody in the low register of the solo instrument. Written to showcase the technical skill of the performer, the work ends with an *allegro vivo* section marked by runs, arpeggios, and a bold finish.

Russian-born Igor Stravinsky received wide acclaim for his ballet suites, including *Petrouchka* and *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Although influenced by numerous musical geniuses including Rimsky-Korsakov, Prokofiev, and Bartók, Stravinsky was certainly a man of revolutionary uniqueness. After helping shape the neoclassicism movement, resulting in works like *The Rake's Progress* and *Symphony of Psalms*, Stravinsky quickly turned to the world of serial music. Influenced by the work of Anton Webern, Stravinsky used a mathematical matrix to extract tone row sequences (known as the 12 tone row). The intricately woven tone progressions, coupled with equally complex rhythmic patterns, were then set to both instrumental and vocal compositions.

Though similarly composed in serial method, *Three Shakespeare Songs* boasts quite a different melodic and rhythmic feeling. *Musick to Heare* exploits major thirds, sixths, and sevenths and has

an extremely incongruous rhythmic pulse between the voice and piano. *Full Fathom Five*, perhaps the most “melodic” of the three pieces, was originally written for Ariel’s song in *The Tempest*. In these verses, she speaks of shipwrecked Ferdinand’s drowned father. Stravinsky employs intervals of the fourth and fifth, as well as specific slur and accent markings for the singer—especially for the final stanza’s onomatopoeic quality: “Ding dong, ding dong, Hearke now, I heare them; ding dong bell.” In the final song, *When Dasies Pied*, the cuckoo bird jovially “mocks married men” whose wives have been unfaithful. The lively tempo and thirty-second note runs enable the listener to envision the flighty bird bantering about the forest.

Based on a poem by W.H. Auden, *Elegy for J.F.K.* employs this serial technique. The challenge for each performer involves not only the seemingly random notes and rhythms, but deciding how each individual voice fits into the work as a whole. This work should not be regarded as merely solo voice with clarinet accompaniment, but as four distinct soloists contributing to the overall musical conversation. Regarding the tragic event surrounding this piece, the emotional journey created by both poet and composer depicts the narrator as angry, questioning, and contemplative. Stravinsky uses text painting, especially on words like “dies” and “cry” to emphasize this journey, perhaps as a metaphor for the grieving process.

Johannes Brahms is perhaps one of the most beloved German Romantic composers, commonly noted for his richly crafted tonal textures and simple yet elegant melodic lines. Highly influenced by the structured classical form of Bach and the romantic tonality of Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn, Brahms once stated that “*If we cannot compose as beautifully as Mozart and Haydn, let us at least try to compose as pure.*” (A. Krantz, Classical Music Archives)

Although the composer never married, his long-time friendship with Clara Schumann certainly impacted his musical career. After Robert Schumann’s death, Brahms continued to care for Clara and her children, often relying on Clara’s musical expertise to critique his

own work. Brahms' romantic feelings toward Clara could not be denied, although their relationship never progressed beyond platonic friendship. Brahms died in 1897 at the age of 64, only a few months after Clara's death. The lingering mystery of their love echoes in many of his musical works, especially the *lieder*.

The pastoral images conjured in *Feldeinsamkeit* are beautifully framed inside a peaceful, pensive melody. The spirited *Ständchen* contrasts a woodland celebration with a woman's longing for reciprocated affection. *Wie Melodien*, one of Brahms' best-known *lieder*, speaks of music's euphoric effect on the human spirit. Shrouded in a sweeping, wave-like melody, the notes themselves emulate both the rise and fall of the voice and the fickle nature of wavering emotion. The last selection, *Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer*, forebodingly describes a lover's inevitable death and anxiety over what his passing will leave behind. The doleful atmosphere, heightened by the hemiola-like rhythm between the voice and piano, gives the piece a sense of unsettled concern.

TRANSLATIONS

In Summer Fields

Quite still I lie where green the grass and tall
And gaze above me into depths unbounded,
By voices of the woodland a constant call,
And by the wondrous blue of Heav'n surrounded.

The lovely snow white clouds drift far and wide,
Like silent dreams through deeps of azure wending,
I feel as though I long ago had died,
To drift with them through realms of bliss unending.

Serenade

The moon hangs over the mountain,
So fitting for love-struck people.
In the garden trickles a fountain;
Otherwise, it is still far and wide.

Near the wall, in shadows,
there stand the students three:
with flute and fiddle and zither,
they sing and play there.

The sounds waft up to the loveliest of women,
gently entering her dreams.
She gazes on her blond beloved
and whispers: "Forget me not!"

It pulls me, like a melody

It pulls at me, like a melody,
Quietly through my mind;
It blossoms like spring flowers
And wafts away like fragrance.

But when it is captured in words,
And placed before my eyes,
It turns pale like a gray mist
And disappears like a breath.

And yet, remaining in my rhymes
There hides still a fragrance,
Which mildly from the quiet bud
My moist eyes call forth.

Ever more peaceful grows my slumber

Ever more peaceful grows my slumber,
Like a thin veil only does my anxiety
lie trembling over me.
Often in my dreams I hear you
calling outside my door,
No one is awake to let you in;
I wake up and weep bitterly.

Yes, I will have to die;
Another will you kiss,
When I am pale and cold.
Before the May breezes blow,
Before the thrush sings in the forest:
if you wish to see me once more,
Come, o come soon!

I have sometimes thought that the mere hearing of these songs would do more to impress truly spiritual-minded men and women with the soul crushing and death-dealing character of slavery, than the reading of whole volumes of its mere physical cruelties.

They speak to the heart and to the soul of the thoughtful.

~Frederick Douglass

The African-American Spiritual is perhaps one of the most indigenous song types in our American culture. Combined with the rhythmic precision of African music and a European Christian overtone, spirituals contain a musical language that is disarming, emotive, and highly religious. John Jacob Nile's lullaby, *Little Black Star*, combines a gentle melody and simple words sung in dialect. The text for *Crucifixion* comes from Isaiah 53:7: He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth, he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. Repetitious texts and simple melodies are distinct characteristics of the call and response style found in many spirituals. *Zion's Walls* resembles the lively dance-like tunes called "jubilees," reserved for times of celebration and worship. "Marching to Zion" frequented many slave songs, metaphorically symbolizing death itself and/or escaping to freedom. Finally, the popular tune *Steal Away* describes the narrator's desire to leave this earthly world of trouble and enter into a land of peaceful rest. Again, the original text was most likely used as an escape tool for the Underground Railroad—"steal away to heaven" signifying a slave's escape into Northern territory.